

Cooper, Samuel

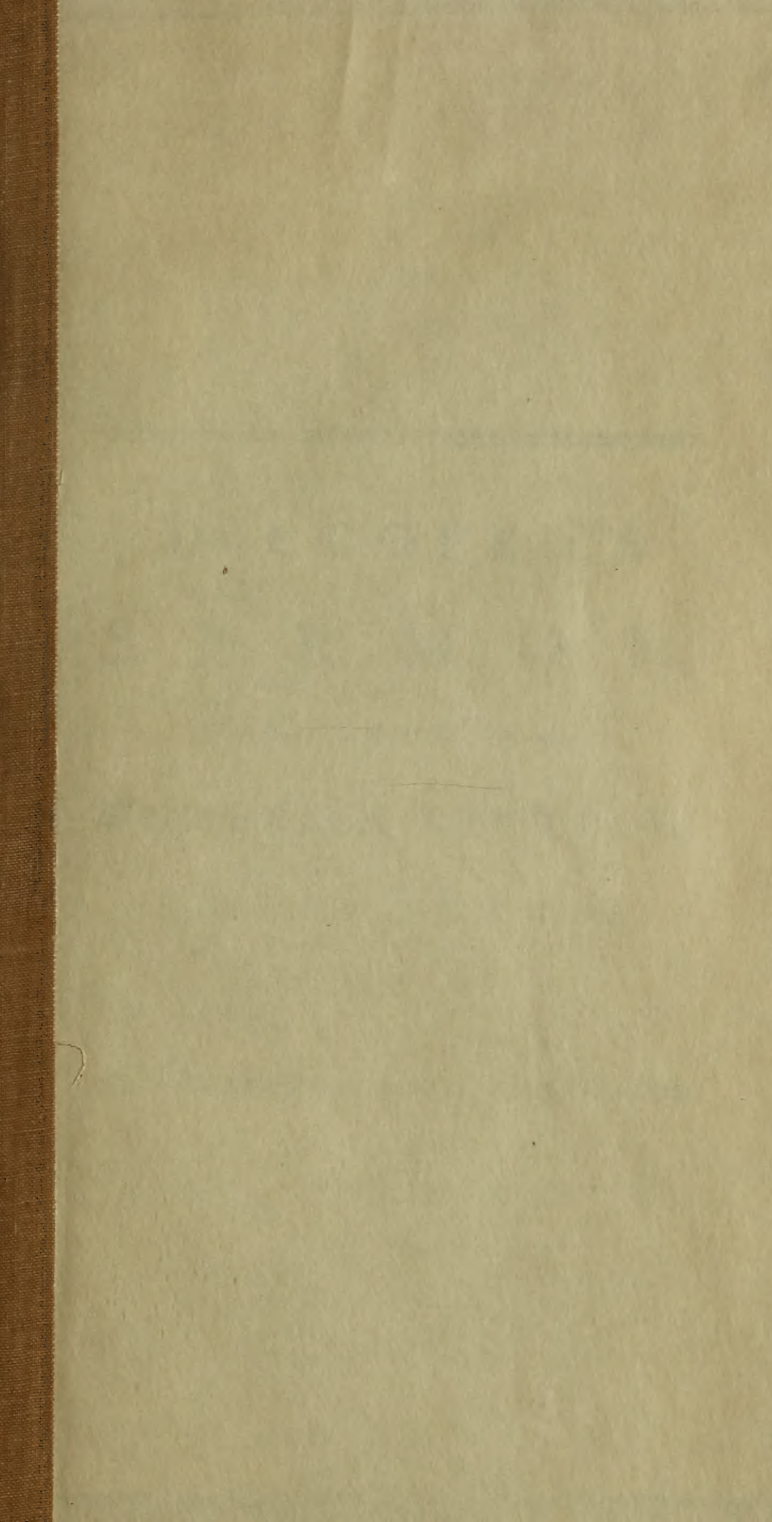
Discourse on the man of sin

Div.S.
282
C778D

DUKE
UNIVERSITY



DIVINITY SCHOOL
LIBRARY



DR. COOPER'S
SERMON.

PREACHED At The
DUDLEIAN-LECTURE,

SEPTEMBER 1st,

M, D C C, L X X I I I.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Duke University Libraries

A
DISCOURSE
ON THE
MAN OF SIN;
DELIVERED IN THE
CHAPEL OF HARVARD COLLEGE,
IN

CAMBRIDGE, NEW-ENGLAND,

SEPTEMBER 1, 1773:

At the LECTURE, FOUNDED

By the HONORABLE

PAUL DUDLEY, ESQ.

By SAMUEL COOPER, D. D.

Pastor of the Church in *Brattle-Street*, BOSTON.

BOSTON: Printed and Sold at GREENLEAF'S
Printing-Office, in HANOVER-STREET.
M, D C C, L X X I V.



II. THESSALONIANS,

II. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10.

NOW we beseech you brethren by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him; that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed. The son of perdition — who opposeth, and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that He as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that He is God.

And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved.

* * * HE Romish superstition, considered in it's structure, and the progress it has made in the world, is at once a surprizing monument of human sagacity and weakness.

ADVANCING by slow degrees to that fatal maturity it acquired before the reformation, it was nurtured by the observation and experience of ages, and the abilities of a long succession of as deep politicians as perhaps the world ever produced. It discovers a thorough acquaintance with the frailty of the human mind: Its pomp and pageantry strike the senses: It manages with uncommon art and address, every object that can touch the passions; and while it flatters the corrupt inclinations of the heart, it is at the same time covered with a glare of devotion and austerity, and supported with a sophistry, extremely adapted to dazzle and mislead the understanding.

LONG before *Luther* appeared, it had extended itself over the whole face of the christian world: It had grown venerable by age: It had acquired astonishing strength by its long prepossession of the minds of men: It had broken and almost extinguished, what it had most to dread, a liberal spirit of inquiry: To conceal its own opposition to the

model upon which it professed to form itself, it had artfully withdrawn the sacred scriptures from common view ; It had closely interwoven itself with the constitution of states and kingdoms ; and under a pretence of aiding, had strangely gained an ascendancy over the civil power, for which it soon pleaded a divine authority. While therefore we may justly wonder that so much of it remains in this enlightened age, we are at the same time obliged to acknowledge and adore a particular interposition of divine providence, in the rescue of so many countries, from a species of false religion, remarkable for the deep possession it takes of the minds of those who have once been devoted to it.

POPERY, like other oppressive powers, grew too confident of it's own strength, and presumed too much upon the ignorance and submissive temper of those whom it had subjected. Having long practised, with amazing success, upon the credulity and weakness of mankind, it at length pushed

the experiment too far. Contrary to that spirit of dissimulation and subtilty by which it had been generally guided, it neglected to varnish it's avarice, and venal dispensations for licentiousness, with the colour of prudence and sobriety. The sale of indulgencies at the beginning of the sixteenth century, was conducted in a manner that shocked the grossest understanding, and offended the consciences even of those who had implicitly resigned them to the direction of the church, and had never entertained very rigid sentiments of morality.

THIS roused the great spirit of *Luther*, and prepared the minds of men to listen to his discourses, and adopt his free and noble sentiments, as they gradually opened and enlarged themselves.

HAPPILY for the cause of truth and righteousness, the tenth *Leo*, though careless of the reputation of the church for sanctity and morals, was a friend and patron of the arts and sciences. Protected and postured by him, they were

eagerly seized by the reformers, and employed by them with happy success in effecting one of the most important and glorious revolutions the christian church ever saw. The human mind, awakened from it's lethargy, and engaged in the pursuit of religious truth; felt an unusual pleasure in the free exertion of it's own faculties, and pushed it's inquiries from one subject to another with great eagerness and advantage. The scriptures being laid open, and the explanation of them greatly aided by the revival of the *Greek* and *Roman* learning, it soon appeared how contrary the distinguishing doctrines of *Popery* were, to those delivered by Christ and his apostles; and how exactly the church of *Rome*, that had so long been revered as *the pillar and ground of truth*, resembled that apostate and idolatrous, that subtil and fraudulent, that tyrannical and persecuting power, predicted in our text, and in other passages of the new testament.

With this resemblance, the reformers and their followers were greatly struck,

B

[Page 8. last line, for "posture" read fostered.]

and finding the event so plainly corresponding to the prophesy, not only their faith was hereby confirmed in the sacred writings, as a revelation from him *who alone declareth the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done*; but their confidence in the truth and goodness of their cause was strengthened, and their honest zeal and ambition enlivened, to separate themselves from a religious community that had so grossly departed from the doctrine and precepts of *Jesus*; to oppose it's corruptions with the *armor of light*; and to be honoured as instruments in the hand of divine providence, of delivering mankind from a system of false religion, which the prophetic spirit itself had described and execrated as a *child of perdition*.

UPON this ground they boldly withstood the exorbitant and impious demands of the chair of *St. Peter*, which had long been regarded as the center of unity, and infallible in it's dictates; Upon this ground they supported themselves against the charge of *schism*, a charge which in that day carried a dreadful sound to the ears of men, and which the

papal power had employed every artifice, every species of persecution and cruelty, to render formidable.

THE argument was indeed popular, and had great effect: The sound of *anti-christ*, and the *Man of Sin*, must have heightened an abhorrence of the Bishop of *Rome*. But the reformers did not invent it; they found it prepared for them by the spirit of truth; and they urged it with a manly boldness and energy, for which they will long be honoured in the church of God. That it was not the extravagance of enthusiasm, nor the artifice of a party heated by controversy, and exasperated by injuries, to support its own cause, but the result of a sober, tho' free inquiry into the sacred writings, has been confirmed by the judgment of the most learned and temperate expositors from that day to the present; and must be evident to every one who impartially considers what these writings have delivered to us upon this point, and particularly the passage of *St. Paul*, which I have now read. A subject that very properly comes under our present con-

sideration, as it has been particularly pointed out by the honourable founder of this Lecture ; who, in an institution that will transmit his name to posterity as a warm and generous friend to protestant piety, and the rights of conscience, has expressed his will, that the business of the third discourse upon this occasion should be “ for the detecting
 “ and exposing the idolatry of the Ro-
 “ miss church ; their tyranny, usurpa-
 “ tion, fatal errors, abominable super-
 “ stitions, and other crying wicked-
 “ nesses in their high places ; and fin-
 “ ally, to prove that the church of Rome
 “ is that mystical *Babylon*, that MAN OF
 “ SIN, that apostate church, spoken of
 “ in the *New-Testament*.

No one will assert that prophesy, or a prediction of things to come, which depend upon what are to us contingencies, is impossible. To man indeed, futurity is veiled, or at best, the object of uncertain conjecture ; but to the eye of God *all things are naked and open*. He may then, in what manner, and to what degree he pleases, foretell future events,

Nor is there in reason, any presumption against his doing this, upon special occasions, and for some important purpose. And when he does it, in a manner plainly beyond all human foresight, and in a great compass and variety of connected instances, such a scheme of prophecy, accomplished, authenticates itself, and carries in the very face of it, the most genuine and convincing mark of it's divine original and authority.

BE it allowed, that a bold conjecture may be fortunate, and the event sometimes surprizingly answer to what was foretold at random, or upon the principles of human probability, or some pretended occult art. Let the prediction of *Vettius Valens*, the augur, * respecting the duration of the *Roman*

* From the twelve vultures that appeared to *Romulus*, *Valens* foretold that the sovereignty of *Rome* would last twelve hundred years.

Dr. *Hurd* cites another prediction, respecting what he calls a *still more important subject*, in which every American is particularly interested. "A Poet, says he, in the idea of paganism, was a Prophet too. And *Seneca* hath left us in proof of the inspiration to which, in his dou-

empire, be cited as an example. Should we grant that this was as remarkable in it's accomplishment as it is said to have been, and that more of the like kind might be produced ; yet, what sober man can suppose, that a few such unconnected instances, respecting separate and unrelated events, in distant ages, can vie with

ble capacity, he might pretend, the following Oracle.

“ ——— *Venient annis*
Secula feris, quibus Occanus
Vincula Rerum laxet, et ingens
Pateat Tellus, Typhisque novos
Detegat Orbis ; nec sit Terris
Ultima Thule.

“ This prediction was made in the reign of
 “ Nero ; and for more than fourteen hundred
 “ years, might only pass for one of those fallies of
 “ imagination, in which poetry so much delights.
 “ But when at length, in the close of the fif-
 “ teenth century, the discoveries of Columbus
 “ had realized this vision ; when that enter-
 “ prizing navigator had forced the barriers of
 “ the vast atlantic ocean ; had loosened what
 “ the Poet calls *the chain of things* ; and in
 “ these later ages, as was expressly signified, had
 “ set at liberty an immense continent, shut up
 “ before in surrounding seas from the commerce
 “ and acquaintance of our world : When this
 “ event I say, so important and so unexpected
 “ came to pass, it might almost surprize one into
 “ a belief, that the prediction was something
 “ more than a poetical fancy ; and that Hea-

or diminish the credit and authority of the scripture system of prophecy. A system vastly extensive, and consisting of a great variety of parts, all closely combined in tendency and design; surprizingly various; and yet minutely particular in the events it foretells, which do all gravitate, so to speak, to one common centre: A prophetic system, that has been gradually accomplishing from the infancy of the world; that is

“ven had indeed revealed to one favoured Spaniard, what it had decreed, in due time, to accomplish by another.”

The Dr. adds, “These two instances of casual conjecture, converted by time and accident into prophecies, I take for granted, are as remarkable as any other that can be alleged.” *Hurd's Sermon at the Lecture of the Bishop of Gloucester.* p. 101.

The last is quoted by Dr. *Samuel Mather*, in his *Attempt to shew that America must be known to the Ancients*. His remark upon it is; “We need not be so unreasonably credulous as to believe, that when *Seneca* wrote in this manner, he was inspired with the spirit of prophecy; no; for nothing of this sort appears. It is much more likely that either from some faint apprehension of the structure of the terraqueous globe, or from some traditional accounts of the greatness of the earth, and of another world besides their old one; he might write after this seemingly prophetic manner.”

fulfilling more and more every day, and increasing the evidence of it's own divine original, and will do so, till *the mystery of God shall be finished.*

It has been insinuated, not only without proof, but in direct opposition to the testimony of all history, that some scripture predictions were framed after the events had happened, and are only histories, antedated and transmuted by pious fraud into the shape of prophecies. But this cannot be pretended in the instance we are now considering. For as the ancient predictions respecting Jesus Christ were in the hands of the *Jews*, his greatest enemies, who preserved with religious care and veneration, what has long since become the monument of their own blindness, and obstinate infidelity; so the prophecies of the new-testament, concerning the apostacy of the church of *Rome*, have been for many ages in the custody of that church (a very strict custody indeed); and with all their policy, so infatuated have they been, as that with these predictions in

their hands, the divine authority of which they zealously maintain, they have yet been gradually fulfilling them, and proving their own ecclesiastical polity, to be that very *mystery of iniquity* there described, and devoted to destruction.

LET it be further observed, that though we esteem the argument from prophecy, to be solid and convincing, and a good additional one, against the church of *Rome*; yet it is only one, among many; and not so essential to the Protestant cause, as that upon supposition it should fail, and be given up, that cause must fall with it. The main arguments against the corruptions of Popery, arise from their own intrinsic absurdity, and direct opposition to the first notices of the human mind in a religious inquiry; from the unprophetic and didactic part of holy writ; from the plain doctrines and precepts of Jesus Christ; and from the genius and spirit with which the whole gospel is animated and distinguished. Not only doth scripture condemn, but reason

and common sense reclaim, against the distinguishing tenets and practises of the church of *Rome* ; and against that arrogant and lordly, that intolerant and cruel, that delusive and worldly spirit, that guides her decisions, directs her conduct, and breaths through the whole pompous exterior of her religious offices and rites. So that we have enough to satisfy us, without recurring to prophecy, that Popery is in the true and proper sense, *antichristian*.

YET, when we behold with wonder this system of falshood and iniquity, and that divine providence should permit it to lift it's head so high, and to obtain so wide and lasting an establishment, in the visible kingdom of God ; does it not relieve our minds, and support our constancy to the truth, to consider, that all this was not unforeseen by the true head of the church ; that it was permitted by him for wise and holy purposes ; that it was foretold, and the church early warned of it by the spirit of truth ; and that the same spirit hath assured us, this grand delusion shall in due time pass away, and like the " base-

less fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind."

I AM aware* indeed, that in the catalogue of learned authors, who consider the papal power as antichrist,* and pictured by St. *Paul* in our text, some distinguished Protestant names are not to be found. A particular account of the ground of this dissent, on the one side, and what has been offered on the other, by the much larger number of equally great and unbiassed men, cannot be expected in a single discourse. †

GROTIUS, supposes this prophecy to refer to the time preceeding the destruction of the temple at *Jerusalem*, and that the *Man of Sin*, was the Roman Emperor *Caligula* : And not being able to make out the resemblance, between this Emperor and the subsequent part of the description, he is obliged to introduce *Simon Magus*, as that wicked one who was to come *with signs and lying*.

* Among those who are in favour of this opinion, we find a *Newton* and a *Clarke*.

† See, *Mede*, *Poole*, *Whitby*, *Benson*, *Bishop*, *Newton*, *Hurd*, &c.

wonders. But *Grotius*, whose parts and learning are every where confessed, carried his candor to an excess. He was deeply engaged in a plan, which almost every one but himself considered as vain and impracticable, for accommodating the difference between the Protestant and Popish communion: His hopes, however upon this point, were for a good reason, flattered by some of the most respectable personages on the papal side. This might give a bias even to the mind of so great a man; and knowing that nothing was more offensive to the Pope and his adherents, than the application of the prophecies concerning *antichrist*, and the *Man of Sin* to the papal chair, he might be led to employ his abilities to find out another meaning. However this may be, it shews the soundness of the common interpretation of this passage, that even such abilities could oppose it with no greater advantage. For it is confessed on all hands, that *Grotius* never fell so much below himself as upon this argument. The Romanists themselves have tacitly acknowledged this, of whom

it has been observed, that while they have been fond of his name in this dispute, they have never boasted of the strength or success of his arguments. In the opinion of the best chronologists, the accomplishment he contends for, was prior to the prophesy; for *Caligula* died before *St. Paul* wrote this epistle.

DR. Hammond, supposes *Simon Magus* and the *Gnostics* to be here described. Among the learned refuters of this supposition, *Grotius* himself is one; and *Le' Clerc*, another; whose opinion is, that the apostacy predicted in this passage of *St. Paul*, was the revolt of the *Jews* from the *Romans*; and that *Simon* the son of *Gioras*, who headed the revolt, in conjunction with his rebellious followers, was the *Man of Sin*.

THE defenders of the Bishop of *Rome* are divided in their opinion upon this subject. Some interpret it of *Rome* Pagan, or particular Emperors. Some plainly discern the grand impostor *Mahomet* in this prophetic passage, and as-

fert it refers to him alone ; of which opinion there are writers, not of their own communion. Others, return the weapons of the Protestants upon themselves, and affirm with much resentment and confidence, though little plausibility, and less truth, that the northern heresy, as they call the reformation, is the apostacy foretold by *St. Paul* ; and the chief promoters of it, the *Man of Sin*. * But the greater part of the Romish writers, sensible of the weakness and inconsistency of other interpretations in favour of their cause, do frankly acknowledge that antichrist is here described, the grand opposer of Christ and his religion. But antichrist say they, is a single person, not a combination or succession of persons ; his continuance upon earth will be very short : Adopting upon this occasion the prophetic period, *a time, and times, and half a time*, and taking it literally, they limit the duration of antichrist to three years and an half. He will be revealed, they affirm, some time before the

* Bishop Newton, Dr. Benson,

coming of our Lord at the last day ; when the church will feel the sad effects of his subtilty and power ; but, in their opinion, he has never yet made his appearance in the world.

This deserves particular attention. It is an important confession from an adversary ; not from a single writer upon this subject, but the best Popish Doctors. *Calmet* himself, in his Dissertation upon antichrist, authorises us to assert this. They own then, that *antichrist* and the *Man of Sin*, are one and the same ; they own that nothing has yet appeared in the world to fulfil the prophecies concerning this iniquitous power. Is not this to confess, that all the expositors we have now mentioned, and others who have endeavoured to prove, that *Simon Magus*, the *Gnostics*, the revolting *Jews*, the *Roman Emperors*, or *Mahomet*, were solely intended by these predictions, are quite mistaken, since antichrist has never yet been seen ? Strange indeed, that so remarkable a power as the mystery of iniquity is represented to be, in the sacred writings, and which the

Apostle expressly tells us began to work in his own day, should not in the course of seventeen hundred years, have grown to such a size as to be visible somewhere! Yet so it is, according to the best interpreters on the papal side; and if anti-christ is not to be found in the chair of *St. Peter*, he is no where to be found; but like the imaginary Messiah of the modern *Jews*, is still to come.

How then, you may perhaps say, shall we distinguish truth from error upon such a subject, and amidst so many various and contradictory opinions of those who have employed much time, and no small abilities, in these researches? But let us not be discouraged: Difficulties excite attention, and call forth the exertion of the human mind; and attention to so noble a subject as the sacred writings will ever be well repaid. There is a portion of obscurity intermingled with the light of scripture prophecies, before their accomplishment, and even after this is considerably advanced. We ourselves are able to assign some good reason for this;

and there may be more, with which we are not acquainted. Even the doctrinal part of scripture is not in all it's branches, so plain, but that wise and good men have differed in their explanations of it ; and can we wonder that this should take place with respect to the prophetic ! If we do not drop our attention to the former upon this account, why should we to the latter. Are not the decisions of mere reason, in different persons; various and often opposite upon the same subject ? Must we therefore turn sceptics ? Time matures our observations and reasonings upon common subjects, and gives us an increase of *natural* knowledge : Time rewards our *religious* inquiries with a knowledge more important : Time illustrates what was dark, and explains what was mysterious in the prophecies of holy writ. The successive labours of the learned and inquisitive, upon this, as upon all other subjects, however they may differ in their process, and conclusions, have jointly contributed to enlarge the human understanding.

DR. *Whitby*, whom I have not yet mentioned, so far agrees with *Le' Clerc*, as to suppose this apostacy, or *falling away*, to intend the rebellion of the *Jews* against the *Roman* government; but then he includes in it also, the apostacy of many *Jewish* converts, from the christian faith; and the *Man of Sin*, according to his explanation, is the body of the *Jewish* nation, *the man of disobedience, who will not submit to law and government*. He allows, however, this and other characters here given, to refer in part to the papal apostacy and usurpation. "I grant, says he, it may in a secondary sense, be attributed to the papal antichrist or *Man of Sin*, and may be signally fulfilled in him, he being the successor to the apostate *Jewish* church, to whom these characters agree as well as to her."

THIS leads me to observe, that there is doubtless, a double sense in many scripture prophecies. By this double sense, I do not mean a studied and deceitful uncertainty in the expression, on purpose to secure the credit of the

prediction, on which side soever the event may fall.

OF this kind was the answer of the oracle at *Delphos* to *Cresus*: To *Pyrrhus* it was the same: So compleat was the ambiguity, that one would hesitate in determining which was the most natural construction of the words, whether the *Romans* should vanquish him, or he should vanquish the *Romans*.

SUCH was the base duplicity of the ancient Pagan oracles, which some, even of their own writers have not failed to complain of, and expose. But not an instance of this kind is to be found in the prophecies of scripture. They do not indeed speak of single and unrelated events; they are a regular system, whose parts relate to one another, and to one grand object; and when they predict an event, they often do it in language that plainly rises above it, and looks further, and is afterwards found to be more fully accomplished in a subsequent one, similar indeed to the first, but perhaps much more important. This is what I intend by a double

sense : More events than one may correspond to, and be intended by, the same prediction ; events that have some general resemblance to each other, and refer to one grand design, though they may differ in some circumstances, and happen in distant ages.

THIS is undoubtedly true of the prophecies of holy writ ; and so far is it from diminishing, that it rather increases their lustre and authority. They appear more plainly from this circumstance to be a plain of prophecy not to be counterfeited ; and to proceed from that divine foresight, to which all events in all ages, are at once open. This was the opinion of Lord Bacon. “ In sorting the prophecies of scripture with their events, we must allow for that latitude which is agreeable and familiar to divine prophecies, being of the nature of their author, with whom *a thousand years are but as one day* : And therefore they are not fulfilled punctually at once, but have springing and germinant accomplishment throughout many ages, though the height or fullness

of them may refer to some one age.²²
Thus speaks that great man.

THERE is a general analogy that runs through the whole providence and moral government of *God*. One thing is often by it's very nature the figure and type of another. The dispensation of *Moses* was a ruder draught of that which the gospel has established; and the state of the Jewish, precluded in many circumstances that of the Christian church. And though the ancient prophecies might be partly fulfilled in that age, yet we cannot doubt that they looked further, and have been more fully accomplished under the gospel. In like manner, there is an analogy between the first and succeeding ages of the christian church; and though the predictions of our Saviour and his apostles might have a first respect to events, in their own day, or not very distant from it, yet we have the best reason to conclude, that in many parts of them, they regarded distant ages, and will not have their full and absolute completion till

the time of the restitution of all things.

UPON this principle, may we not in some measure, reconcile the opinions of the learned Protestant authors before mentioned, and even some of the Romish, with the truth of scripture prophecy, and at the same time maintain the conclusion of by far the greater part of our own writers, that the papal antichrist is ultimately intended by the *Man of Sin*, and that no other power fully answers to all the characters in this prophetic description.

THE Apostle *John* expressly tells us, that there are *many antichrists*. These are of different forms and sizes, and may appear in different ages, though all agreeing in their opposition to Jesus Christ and his kingdom. A number of them then may be so considerable, as to be the subject of scripture prophecy, and pointed out before hand by the spirit of truth in this and other predictions, for the warning and support of the faithful in different periods, though there may be one principal antichrist, chiefly and ultimate.

ly intended by these predictions, in which they do all evidently center and unite.

WE may grant then, that the *Man of Sin*, he that opposeth himself, and was in due time to be consumed and destroyed, does not exclusively intend the papal power, but also other enemies to christianity, * in or near to the apostles time; and some that are contemporary with this power. All of these are certainly not too small and incon-

* " There is, says a late learned and judicious writer, a complex kind of prophecy, viz. when future persons and things in their natural characters and actions, are made emblems of persons and things more remote than themselves, and are predicted with this very view, that they may represent them. In this certainly there is nothing incongruous. Known unto God are all the actions of men from the beginning. Every event that comes to pass is the effect of his providence. From the characters and actions therefore of persons, who he knew would come upon the stage, he might easily choose those which in their nature and circumstances, were best adapted to be emblematical representations of the future persons and events to be introduced in more distant periods: And having fixed upon such as he saw to be proper for that end, it was every way agreeable to his wisdom to foretell them, in order that he might raise and keep up among mankind, an expectation of the more

siderable to be noticed in the predictions of holy writ, and ranked among the grand opposers of the gospel. Nor would our concession injure the unity of design in these predictions; or weaken the evidence, that in our text, the Romish antichrist is chiefly intended.

THE Jewish nation as a body were adversaries to Christ, and persecutors of his followers: Those of them that apostatized from the christian faith were

distant greater events. Indeed this method of prophecy is so far from being absurd, that nothing can be conceived better adapted to display the perfections of God. For it gives us the grandest, most magnificent, and most affecting idea of the power and fore-knowledge of God, and of the extent of his providence; whereby the world is governed."

"Of this kind of prophecy we have an example 2 Sam. vii. 12. In it's first meaning, this prophecy evidently refers to *Solomon*. Nevertheless, that it had a second meaning, referring to more distant persons, is equally plain. The different passages of the prophecy must be applied, in their highest senses, to the different persons spoken of, according to the peculiar nature of each. Some, of *Solomon*, and his ordinary descendants: Others, of the Messiah only; and of *Solomon*, as his type."

MACKNIGHT'S Truth of Gospel History. P. 186.

perhaps as fierce in this opposition as any: Their Sanhedrim and High Priest, who sat *in the temple of God*, were the leaders in this persecution: They were for exalting themselves above the *Roman* Emperors, called *Gods* in the sense that civil rulers are so called in the sacred writings. But the power and polity of this nation was soon after, according to scripture predictions, signally broken, by the coming of the Lord Jesus, to execute his judgments upon them.

SIMON MAGUS was a *Man of Sin*; he came with *signs and lying wonders*; but with other seducers, and opposers of the gospel, who accompanied, or soon followed him, he has long since passed away.

THE Pagan Emperors employed their power to destroy the religion of Jesus in it's infancy, and severely oppressed and persecuted his followers: But the gospel, as had been foretold, prevailed; and at length the Empire, with *Constantine* at it's head, assumed the profession of christianity. This was

one remarkable coming of the son of man, though clouded by the internal corruptions of the church.

MAHOMET, was a *Man of Sin*, a false prophet; who came with *deceivableness of unrighteousness* and induced many to believe a lie; a great and successful opposer of the gospel by the sword. His seat, the Turkish Empire, has for a long time, according to scripture predictions, been upon the decline. It was once the terror of all *Europe*; it can now scarcely support itself against the attack of a single Christian power.

How far we may allow this prophetic description of *St. Paul* to refer to these persons, and events, I leave, after what has been said, to the decision of others: My principal design being to shew, that none of them do fully answer and absolve this prophecy; while in the Papal antichrist, all the characters surprizingly center and unite.

THESE characters are, *apostacy*; a *Man of Sin* who *sitteth in the temple of God*; or in the church; who at the same time

opposeth himself to Christ and his kingdom ; who exalteth himself above all that is called God, all civil rulers ; who sheweth himself that he is God, impiously assuming the power and authority of the almighty : Who comes after the working of Satan ; with cruelty, subtilty, and unrighteous deceivings ; with lying wonders and false miracles. The time also of his appearance, though not particularly ascertained, is in general pointed out by several circumstances.

SOME of these characters do not agree to the body of the Jewish nation. They did not apostatize from christianity, for they never assumed that profession : Those who fell away from the gospel, had no leader, and were absorbed in the much greater part of the nation, to which they returned. *Simon* the son of *Gioras* was never exalted above the Emperor, but became his captive. Neither he, nor the High Priest, nor the Sanhedrim, much less the body of the nation, ever sat in the temple, and received homage as God ; for the Jews in that age, with all their impieties, and

vices, had the greatest abhorrence of idolatry, and could not endure any approaches to it. These important circumstances evidence, that the Jewish nation does not afford a compleat fulfilment of this prophecy.

NEITHER do *Simon Magus*, and the *Gnostics*, as *Dr. Whitby* has largely and fully proved. The Apostle declares, in the beginning of this chapter, *that the day of Christ was not at hand*: But if by this day be principally meant, the day in which he was to come for the destruction of *Simon Magus*, as *Dr. Hammond's* hypothesis supposes, it was, contrary to the declaration of the Apostle, near at hand; for *Simon* perished within four years after the writing of this epistle; and sixteen years before the destruction of *Jerusalem*. He never sat, *shewing himself as God*, either in the Jewish temple, or the Christian church. Nor did the sect of the *Gnostics* fall with this their supposed leader; nor indeed with the *Jews*, at the ruin of their temple and City; for it prevailed most after both these events.

THE Roman Emperors, though inimical to Jesus and his religion, do not fully answer to this description of the *Man of Sin*. They never apostatized either from the Jewish or Christian faith: They were revealed before the writing of this epistle: Their power and authority, and their enmity to the gospel, was open and known to all the world; whereas the Apostle informs us, that the *Man of Sin*, though he already began to work, yet did not appear, but was to be revealed in some future time. They did not pretend to the power of working miracles; nor was their chair or seat in the temple of God.

MAHOMET was no apostate; for he never professed either the religion of Moses, or of Jesus. He never sat in the temple of God; for though he changed many Christian churches into Mosques; yet certainly these edifices, filled with Mahometan zealots, could not be called after such a change, in the sense of the Apostle, the temple or the church of God: Nor did this deceiver ever pretend to establish his authority by

miracles. This is acknowledged, as Dr. *Prideaux* assures us, in the Alcoran itself, and by the best interpreters of it.

As to the recrimination of the Papal writers against the Protestants upon this point; in order to shew the justice of it, they must first prove that the reformed churches have a *Man of Sin* at their head, to whose supremacy they pay an unlimited submission; that he sitteth in some capital temple *as God*; and that his cause has been promoted by pretended miracles; And finally, to prove the reformation an apostacy, they must overthrow all the arguments brought by the reformed against the distinguishing dogmas and rites of their own church; and evidence, that these are supported by the authority of the new-testament. But this would be a much-greater miracle, than with all their pretensions, they have ever yet been able to perform.

HAVING thus shewn, that none of these persons and events do fully answer to this prophecy; though in several of them there is some general and strong

resemblance of it ; if now we can prove that all it's characters are to be found in the Papal power, it must satisfy us, that this power was ultimately, and principally intended by it.

IN the first place, let it be observed ; that the Apostle's design in the beginning of this epistle, is to shew, that *the day of Christ*, by which he plainly means, as has been abundantly proved by expositors, the final judgment, *was not at hand*, and should not come, *except there come a falling away first ; and that Man of Sin be revealed*. By which he strongly intimates, that the apostacy he principally meant should be extended to a distant time, and far beyond the destruction of *Jerusalem*.

THIS apostacy is evidently a religious one ; not a falling away from government, but from the purity of faith and worship : It was to be effected by *strong delusions*, and the *deceivableness of unrighteousness* ; through which those who had not the love of the truth, should be induced to believe a lie that they might be damned ; having had pleasure in unrighteousness, and been fond of the deception.

THE principal character in it ; the leader, to whom the prophecy chiefly refers, is the *Man of Sin* : A strong expression, indicating not only one who is very wicked himself, but eminently induces others to act wickedly. By this *Man*, in the singular number, the absolute monarchy in the church of *Rome* is well described ; though we do not suppose any particular Pope is intended, but the Bishops of *Rome* in succession. It gives us a general character of that order of men, and of those who have had the principal share in their ecclesiastical administration ; the chief promoters and defenders of the Romish apostacy.

THAT this application, severe as it may seem to be, is not unjust, all history attests. No man can read *Platina's* lives of the Popes, and *Bower's* larger and more modern history, without being shocked at the impieties, the perfidy, and unbounded debaucheries of those who have sat in *St. Peter's* chair ; and without acknowledging, that these, if any upon earth, were *Men of Sin*. Nor can we take even a cursory view of the Pa-

pal system of religion ; it's direct opposition to the honour of God and the one mediator ; it's gross superstition and idolatries ; it's tendency to debase and enslave the human mind ; the indulgence it grants to vice in every form ; and the pleas it allows for crimes, at which the untutored breast immediately revolts ; without acknowledging, that the contrivers of such a system, with the gospel in their hands, must have had an heart, to an uncommon degree insensible and depraved.

ANOTHER character is, *he opposeth* : He is an adversary to Jesus Christ and his Kingdom. This directly answers to the name *antichrist*, and indicates the head of the Romish church to be the principal *antichrist*, spoken of by St. *John* ; which may signify, both one who places himself in the room of Christ, and acts in opposition to him. The Pope calls himself the vicar of Christ ; the only visible head of the church ; and blasphemously arrogates to himself the infallibility and supremacy of our

ascended Lord. Under the pretence of serving him, he steps into his place; and there corrupts the simplicity, defiles the purity, and opposes the true power and spirit of his religion. This *Son of perdition*, the very phrase by which our Lord describes *Judas*, betrays his master with a kiss, and sells him for silver; debasing his doctrine and worship for the gain of unrighteousness.

HE opposes with fierceness, as well as subtilty and deceit. *He maketh war with the Saints*, and proves himself to be that cruel and oppressive power, predicted by *Daniel*, and afterwards in the revelations of *St. John*, which *hath horns like a Lamb*, but at the same time, *speaketh like a Dragon*.

How mild his appearance, how gentle his language, upon some occasions! But how dreadful his power! How relentless his cruelty! Speak ye holy souls, for you can tell! Ye martyrs, and confessors! Who, because you would not violate your consciences by submitting to his unrighteous impositions, and renouncing *the truth as it is in Jesus*,

have lost your estates; been torn from your tenderest connections; have languished in dungeons, have groaned upon the wreck, and expired in flames. Speak, ye who suffered in *England* in the *Marian days*! Speak, ye thousands, ye many thousands, that fell at once in the massacres of *Paris* and *Ireland*! Speak, ye *Waldenses*, and *Albigenses*, who fell in still greater numbers, and more varied forms of torture. Your blood indeed is vocal, it crieth from the ground: Though art and falsehood have been employed, to disguise the facts, and to stifle the voice; it pierces through all, and rings in the ears of men, the unparralleled cruelty of that mystical woman, that mother of abominations, the church of *Rome*; drunken with the blood of the *Saints*, and with the blood of the *Martyrs of Jesus*.

IN vain does she attempt to conceal, or palliate this part of her odious character. The stain is indelible. To her we may apply the words of the prophet; *though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet is thine*

Iniquity marked before me, saith the Lord God. *

It can be demonstrated from history that she hath shed ten times more christian blood, by her holy wars, her cruzades, her assassinations, and numberless persecutions, than all the pagan Emperors united. The inhumanity of her court of inquisition is not to be equalled, among the most barbarous nations, nor by any other court, ever erected by the greatest tyrant.

WHAT an idea does it give us of the detestable cruelty of the sons of *Rome*, to be told, that an *American* savage, ready to expire under the hands of the *Spaniards*, asked a priest, who offered to prepare him for Heaven, whether the *Spaniards* would dwell there: Being assured they would; then said he, "let me go to another place." It was the language of nature: He knew he could not be happy with such associates. Much the same idea of christianity was given to the pagan *Saxons*.

* Jer. ii. 22.

Charles the great, under the influence of the court of Rome, *Monfieur St. Faux* fays, having conquered them, commanded them to abstain from meat in Lent, and to be baptized, under pain of death. In this manner was the Prince of peace first revealed to them ; and the poor Saxons were driven to christian baptism, from the terror of being baptized in their own blood, *

* “ Popish writers assure us, that they are
 “ now grown much more mild and moderate,
 “ and have none of the ferocity and cruelty
 “ which was the temper of former times, and
 “ that they condemn persecution for a mere div-
 “ ersity of religious sentiments. They may be so,
 “ and they must be fools who believe them.
 “ It is probable enough, that amongst their
 “ Laity there are several who dislike all sangui-
 “ nary methods of supporting their religion ;
 “ but it is because they do not fully understand
 “ their own ecclesiastical system, into the very
 “ nature of which persecution is so closely wo-
 “ ven, that nothing can separate it. Upon blood
 “ it was built, and by blood it must be support-
 “ ed. Toleration and liberty of conscience
 “ would infallibly undermine and destroy it.
 “ In this present century, and in our own times,
 “ there have been cruel examples of Popish in-
 “ toleration and persecution ; sufficient to warn
 “ us what we are to expect from them.”

THE next character of the *Man of Sin*, is ; he exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped. Who does not immediately confess the Bishop of Rome in this description? He exalteth himself, not only above all pastors, all ecclesiastical officers and dignitaries, but above all civil rulers, who are called Gods ; above all Kings and Emperors. The Emperor *Frederic* the first, held the stirrup of his horse, and was chid for holding it on the wrong side. Another Emperor, *Henry IVth*, waited three days at the gates of Pope *Gregory VIIth*, to obtain an audience. *Frederic*, fell prostrate in *St. Mark's* church at *Venice*, before *Alexander* the III, in presence of the people ; while the humble Bishop, placing his foot upon his neck, uttered that passage of the Psalmist ; *thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder ; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot.* The Prelate of *Rome* has deposed Kings and Emperors ; absolved their subjects from all allegiance to them ; and authoritatively required their taking arms against them.

THIS has not only been done by some who have filled the pontifical chair; but is agreeable to one of the professed principles of the Roman church. It is to be seen in their *decrees*, of at least equal veneration and authority among them; with the Bible itself; "That all Kings and Emperors ought to be subject to the Pope; that he is placed by the Lord over nations and kingdoms; not some only, but all: That whatsoever the *Roman* church ordaineth, must be observed by all, without controul, and everlastingly; and that it is of absolute necessity to salvation; that every human creature should be subject to the holy father. Accordingly; *Clement* the fifth declared, that by his undoubted superiority to the Emperor, and by the fulness of power Christ had given him in the person of *St. Peter*, he did annul all his proceedings."

THE Apostle adds: *So that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself, that he is God. The temple of God,*

signifies in prophetic language, the church of God ; and as the *Man of Sin* was to appear after the abrogation of the Jewish law, it is plainly intimated here, that he was to be found in the christian church ; that by means of his rank and influence in this church, he was to rise to his exorbitant power ; and that it would be held and administered in an ecclesiastical form. He is then a professed christian : The authority he claims is spiritual ; and in the church he receives the homage of a God.

WHAT can give us a more exact idea of the sovereign Pontiff at *Rome* ? When he is elected, he is seated on the high altar of *St. Peter's* church, the very place of the idolized host, which the Papists say is Christ himself : The people prostrate themselves before him, and implore his favour and blessing. They address him, " Our Lord God the Pope." He extends his finger, and makes a motion with his hand ; and their sins are all forgiven. Is not this like the feigned *Jupiter*, on old *Olympus* ? Is not this to sit in the temple as God ?

AFTERWARDS he sovereignly controls every thing in religion. He exalts himself above God himself ; he makes void the law of God by vain traditions and impious establishments of his own. He holds back from the people the scriptures of God, and places in their room his own decrees. He forgives sins upon terms directly opposite to those upon which God hath declared them to be forgiven ; and allows vice to be justified by a casuistry, of which even a pagan would be ashamed.

THE coming of the *Man of Sin* is said by the Apostle to be *after the working of Satan*. This I know is generally taken to refer to the *signs and lying wonders*, mentioned immediately after. But does it not appear natural to suppose, that *this coming after the working of Satan*, may intend, more generally, after the *model* of Satan, the God of this world, in his own kingdom ; or among the pagans, where he had so great an influence ; and that it contains a strong intimation that the corrupt religion introduced and established by the *Man of*

Sin, should bear a strong resemblance, to that which was formerly found in the kingdom of darkness. ? That this is true, no one who takes a fair and impartial view of both, can doubt. So that however really christian *Rome* once was, it has for many ages so far returned to an imitation of it's former pagan idolatries and superstitions, that christianity seems to be almost covered and buried under them. :

IN place of the worship of the one God and Father of all, their prayers and vows are chiefly directed to the Virgin *Mary*, and other saints. The canonization of these saints strongly resembles the apotheosis of the ancient pagans.

THE custom of leaving legacies to their Gods, which grew to such excess, as to require being bounded by the *Roman* law, as we learn from *Ulpian*, has in no small degree been followed by the church of *Rome*. In imitation of the pagan festivals, the Popish calendar has marked at least an equal number of christian holidays. The writers of their legends, and lives of

the Saints, have evidently borrowed the substance of many marvellous tales from *Ovid*, and other pagan authors, leaving out at the same time, the beauty and elegance of the classic originals. *

Go into the churches of modern *Rome*, and according to the account of the most judicious and faithful travellers, you will see almost every thing, *after the working of Satan*, and the model of paganism. You will see many altars, called christan, smoaking at once in the same church, with incense; though the primitive professors of the gospel, would endure any thing, rather than offer incense before an idol. You will there see, as in antient *Rome*, innumerable tapers and candles, burning before the shrines and images of their **Saints**: You will see offerings and votive gifts, of various kinds, hanging round their altars as in a pagan temple; and innumerable devotees, bowing and prostrating themselves before images of wood and stone; and some of these the very images that were adored by

* *Vid.* Jorton and Middleton's Letter from *Rome*.

pagans, having undergone no other change than the ceremony of baptism. Go into their roads, and you will meet with many such images, like those of the guardians of the high ways among the Heathen, and travellers in various forms paying their devotions to them. Enter their cities, you will find the same kind of idols, and receiving the same homage, at the corners of the streets, in the baths, in the markets, and in almost every place of public resort. All this, which is certainly according to the model, formerly produced by the working of Satan, in the darkness of heathenism, you will now find in the patrimony of St. Peter, and in the very city where his pretended successor sits enthroned.

THE Man of Sin, comes, says the Apostle, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders: And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. This part of the description, as exactly corresponds to the papal antichrist, as any we have considered. Every one knows the pious frauds that have been sanctified

and practised by the Romish church; and that it has all along been fond of supporting it's credit and authority by pretended miracles.

BELLARMINE mentions miracles as one mark of the true church; and it would fill volumes, to give a particular account of all these lying wonders. How many ghosts have appeared, to establish the doctrine of purgatory, and support the revenue which the church draws from it? All the images of their Saints, have wrought miracles. They have sweat; they have groaned; they have shed tears; they have bled; they have spoken; they have changed their posture; they have walked; they have flown thro' the air; they have disappeared in one place, and been visible again in another: They have given sight to the blind; hearing to the deaf; health to the sick; and even life to the dead. Almost every votive gift, is produced as an evidence of some miracle performed by the saint at whose shrine it stands; and these miracles are related to encourage such donations, by which the

wealth of the church has become immense. The holy house of *Loretto*, which they tell us, was brought many miles through the air, to the place where it now stands, has upon this account been amazingly enriched by such offerings.

THE legends of the Romish church are full of these ridiculous miracles: And though since knowledge has increased in the world, they have grown more modest in their accounts; yet the same fondness for these lying wonders continues among them; as appears from the pompous account, published not many years ago, of the miracles performed at the tomb of the *Abbe' de Paris*.

It would be endless to reckon up all the *unrighteous deceivings* practiced by the papal antichrist; and to trace the art and subtilty employed to cover the falsehood and deformity of his religious system. - The Pope pretends to nothing but a spiritual power, and holds his territories and wealth in right of *St. Peter*. He is a tender father, and makes no

use of the sword ; he only gives up obstinate heretics and incorrigible offenders to the civil magistrate, and admonishes him to do his duty. Though the idolatry and superstition he authorizes are gross in many instances as the pagan ; and though the people are known to address the image, and to believe that the Saint some how dwells in it ; yet the plea is, that the highest worship is not given to the latter, and that the former is designed only to bring to remembrance some eminently holy person.

WITH what specious pretences doth he varnish some of the blackest crimes, and even sanctify perfidy, treasons, murders and massacres, while he throws the most frightful colours upon every manly assertion of the rights of human nature, and the freedom of conscience? Those who have disputed his usurped authority, and nobly resisted his unrighteous impositions, if it was without the reach of his power to torment their bodies, have at least been blackened by every artifice of calumny, and represented in the most odious characters. *Luther,*

among many others, experienced this: His motives for opposing the papal power, his whole life, and the manner of his dying, have been basely misrepresented by the Romish writers. But the faithful pen of history hath refuted these malicious calumnies, and vindicated his integrity; and without raising him above the frailties of a man, hath preserved his name in all the lustre, that undaunted fortitude, and uncommonly great and successful efforts, in a cause importantly good, never fail to impart.

To those who have a respect for rigid morals, and a life of mortification and self-denial, the Romanists hold up the severity of their penances, and the rigour and austerity of some of their religious orders. At the same time, those who chuse to live like men of the world, need not, upon this account, go out of their church, nor resign one of it's privileges. The Pontiff has the merits of all the Saints, as well as of Christ, in a common fund at his own disposal, and from thence for a good price he draws dispensations, indulgences and pardons,

adequate to the most licentious inclinations. Under this pretext he vacates every obligation to a religious life, and leads those to destruction, who *have pleasure in unrighteousness*; whose condemnation is just; inasmuch as such a deception, so contrary to the prompt decisions of conscience, must be chosen and affected. By these and such like arts, an incredible share of the lands and wealth in *England*, and in other kingdoms and states in *Europe*, was, before the reformation, the property of the church.

THE terms in which the benefit of indulgences, and the necessity of purchasing them, were recommended by *Tetzel* and his associates in *Germany*, are too extravagant to gain belief had we not the most authentic testimony for them. “If any man, said they, purchases letters of indulgence, his soul may rest secure of it’s salvation.” “The souls, confined in purgatory, for whom they are bought, as soon as the money tinkles in the chest, immediately ascend from their torments

H

Robertson’s History of Charles 5. v. 2. p. 41. Am. Ed.

"to Heaven: Through them, the most
 "heinous sins, though one should
 "violate the mother of God, would
 "be remitted! The cross, erected by
 "the *cartholic* preachers of the gospel
 "is as efficacious as the cross of Christ
 "himself. Lo! the Heavens are opened;
 "you may enter now. For twelve
 "pence, you may redeem the soul of
 "your father from purgatory! And
 "are you so ungrateful that you will
 "not redeem the soul of your father
 "from torment? If you had but one
 "coat, you ought to strip yourself
 "instantly and sell it, to purchase such
 "benefits."

To all this we might add the unrighteous deceivings by which the Romanists have corrupted christian morals; their detestable principle, that faith is not to be kept with heretics; the perfidy and inhumanity with which, according to this principle, *Huss* was treated at the council of *Constance*: Their allowance of equivocation and mental reservation; and that the blackest crimes may become innocent and even meritorious, if they be done from a good intention, and for the service of the church. All this is

well known to the world, and may at once be discerned to be part of the character of that *wicked one* described in our text.

BUT high as he may exalt himself; confident as he may be in his own policy and power, and in the support given him by *the kings of the earth*, he is after all the *son of perdition*, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth, and destroy by the brightness of his coming. This prediction, we have before observed, does not respect any particular person, but an order of men in succession, contriving and advancing a system of falshood and iniquity. This is the object to be consumed. The breath of Christ's mouth is his word, and a brightness ever attends it. Error is destroyed by the light of truth, as darkness ceases when the sun appears.

WHILE the *Man of Sin* rose, the gospel was obscured, and gradually withdrawn from the view of men; *the truth was held, or imprisoned, in unrighteousness*. But when this was set at liberty, and the sacred volumes opened, the papal system felt the shock, and was evidently

blasted, though not destroyed, as by the fire of Heaven ; blasted by the stroke of that gospel, which our Saviour compares to *the lightning which cometh out of the East, and shineth even to the West*. So fire proceedeth out of the mouth of the two witnesses in the Revelations, and destroyeth their enemies. The simplicity of the gospel, carries with it a wonderful light and energy : It is great, and will finally prevail. Like a flame, it goes through *the briars and thorns* that oppose it, and *burns them together*. In it's progress, it punishes and torments the obstinately erroneous and wicked : They *gnaw their tongues for pain*, at the detection of those errors they will not renounce, and at the pungent reproof of those vices which they cannot forsake. They have often other punishments from the judicial dispensations of Heaven, even in this life ; which are a prelude of what shall be awarded them, in proportion to their guilt, at the bar of the son of man,

THE second coming of Christ extends in some sense from his ascension to the final judgment. In this period *anti-christ* will be consumed. We have seen

already this part of the prediction in a considerable degree fulfilled. He has surprizingly wasted away. He no longer appears what he once was; the disposer of crowns, the arbiter of kingdoms, and the dread of the world. His strength is abated, and the reverence that was once paid him by Princes greatly diminished. He now palliates and seems half ashamed of what he once openly professed, and boasted in. This is owing to the increasing light springing from the reformation.

NOR ought we to overlook a late event, that deserves particular attention. One of his religious orders, I mean the *Jesuits*, remarkable for a mixture of subtilty and enthusiasm, which rendered them singularly active and successful in his cause, has not long since been suppressed by Princes, that once were most zealously devoted to him, and particularly friendly to this very order. Even the Pope himself, according to some recent accounts, has at length been compelled, sorely against his will, to imitate their example, and to concur with them in this signal, but very humiliating act of reformation.

These things, among others, plainly show, how far this *Lucifer*, son of the morning, this pretended fountain of light, and dispenser of inallible knowlege, hath declined from his zenith, and may be one means of accelerating his descent. However this may be, we are assured, that at further, he will be totally and absolutely destroyed by the brightness of our Lord's second coming.

UPON the whole, whoever compares the predictions of *Daniel*, and *John*, with that of *Paul* in our text, will find in them a surprizing agreement; and that all these distinguished servants of God, spake of the same iniquitous and oppressive power that was to rise in his kingdom, in later ages, and oppose himself to it: A power that *speaketh great things, even great things against the most High, and is full of the names of blasphemy*: A power that *prevaileth against, and weareth out the Saints*; that *changeth times and laws, and assumeth an authority, over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations*: A power that *casteth down the host of Heaven, all civil rulers, and magnifieth himself against the Prince of the host*; to

whom notwithstanding, the Kings of the earth do give their strength : A power that deceiveth, by false miracles, done in the sight of the beast, them that dwell upon the earth ; and upon whom the judgment should finally sit, to take away his dominion, and to consume and destroy it to the end.

“ THE predictions of the three servants of God above-named, concerning the corruptions of christianity in the Romish church, and concerning the political state of the world from first to last, but especially as the revolutions of empire had a relation to our religion, these I say when united, form a prophetic picture, which in respect of the grandeur and importance of the events delineated therein, the variety and singularity of the particulars whereof these events consist, the clearness and precision with which they are delineated, the exactness of their accomplishment, and the length of time taken up in the accomplishment, is one of the most astonishing objects which it is possible for the human mind to contemplate. And therefore the due examination of this picture, cannot fail to strike all wise men with the highest conceptions of the

prescience and power of God, and with the deepest veneration for the christian religion, in the records of which this astonishing picture is found. For common sense dictates, that the ruler of the universe never would give the knowledge of future events to impostors ; especially as upon the credit of that knowledge, they have required mankind to believe the history of Jesus. Wherefore, the corruptions of christianity, instead of being any objection against the divinity of our religion, by having been so particularly predicted, are in reality the foundation of one of the strongest arguments in it's favour." *

TIME will not allow me to enlarge on the reflections which naturally arise from our subject.

WHAT a blessing to mankind was the reformation ? What a yoke of bondage did it break ? Even the papal power, where it still prevails, has been tempered by it. It was at once favourable to civil liberty and to the rights of conscience. Religion and learning revived together. The Bible, the fountain of divine knowledge being unco-

vered, the thirsty came and *drank of the water of life freely*. At the same time the best human models of writing, and the noblest sentiments on civility and government, were read with avidity in the antient classics. The church emerged from darkness ; human society was polished ; the arts cultivated, and commerce enlarged.

THE happy fruits of the reformation have been transplanted to *America*; and what a change have they made already in the face of this continent ? Here may they all flourish to the second coming of the son of man ! And may this literary *Society*, according to the generous design of it's founders, be eminently conducive to so happy a purpose. We have a Romish Bishop, and a Popish colony, not far from us ; where, I am well informed, instead of the advancement of protestant truth, since it's subjection to the British government, numbers have been perverted from our own profession. And if Popery, deceitfully assuming a milder form, seems to be less dreaded and abhorred than it once was ; let us be upon our

guard, and remembering it is Popery still, be prepared to oppose it in every form. At best it is the extremest despotism. It decides all things at once, and by mere authority, and allows no examination of its own mandates and decrees. It is a direct, an everlasting enemy to freedom of inquiry, and consequently to knowledge, and good literature. There are indeed many learned catholics; but the learning among them is in one way or another greatly owing to the reformation: For when Popery reigned without opposition, ignorance every where prevailed. And even at this day, the body of the people in the Romish, are not near so enlightened as in the protestant communion.

POPERY is incompatible with the safety of a free government. It sets up a foreign head, superior to all civil rulers; a spiritual power that reaches to every thing upon earth, and can brook no control. Trampling upon the rights of conscience, and assuming an authority to absolve every sacred obligation, what pledge can it possibly leave us, for the security of civil freedom?

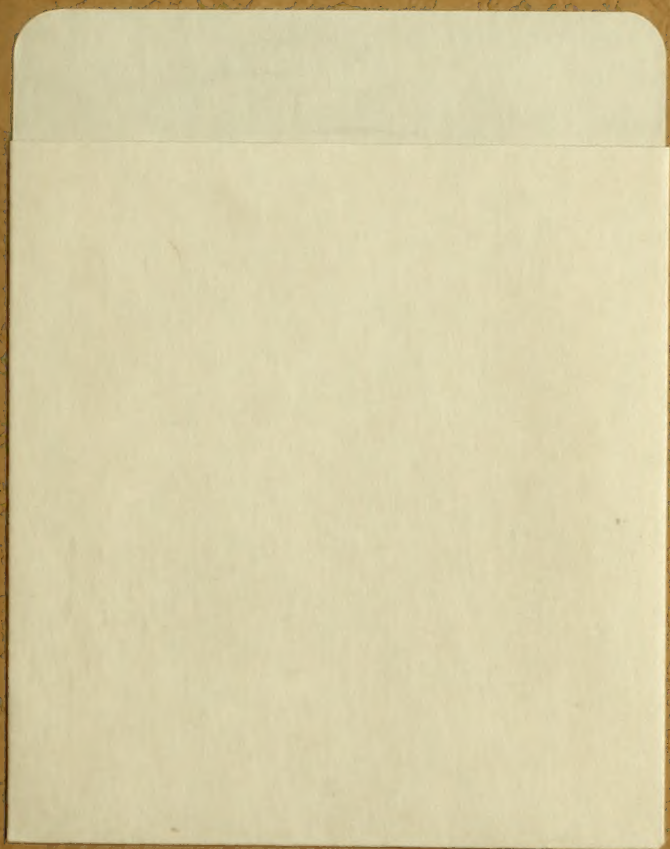
COMPARE the present state of *Italy* with what it once was. Where are the poets, the orators, the philosophers, the statesmen and heroes, that once guided, defended, and adorned that distinguished country? Where are the numbers it supported, and the spirit and vigour of it's inhabitants? Nature is the same; it is tyranny, and most of all, the papal tyranny, that hath made the change. We have indeed, may a Popish bigot say, we have happily no more the fierce contentions of antient *Rome*: All things are now settled by an indisputable authority; and we are at peace. But have there been no bloody contests in papal *Rome*? And what kind of tranquility does it ever enjoy? Is it the ease and happiness of a vigorous, well governed state? Far from it: It is the silence of death; it is the peace of a church yard.

LET us therefore, *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and allow no unscriptural imposition, no trace of the papal bondage, to be found among us!* May a liberal inquiry, a free and temperate discussion, dissipate error of every kind, and by

advancing truth, secure the true order
and felicity both of church and state!
May the honour of the inspired writings,
as the only infallible rule of faith and
practice, and the right of private judg-
ment, the basis of the reformation,
ever be sacredly preserved among us!
And may serious piety, and christian
morals, the end of all, adorn our pro-
fession as protestants, and ever keep pace
with our improvements in speculative
knowledge!

T H E E N D.

Date Due



D02637818Z



Duke University Libraries